Customs Modernization

> *"The government needs to take a systematic, integrated approach to transborder crime which is the foundation of the Modernization Programs, linking people, goods, and enforcement with a shared intelligence and targeting system."*
>
> *S.W. Hall, Jr.*
> *Assistant Commissioner and*
> *Chief Information Officer*
> *U.S. Customs Service*

Modernization Milestones

The Customs Modernization Office (CMO) has begun conducting design reviews for the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE). This involves developers using the approved requirements to create a top-level design and then giving a preliminary review to the CMO for approval. The next step in the process is the critical review of the detailed design that will be used to start building the defined requirements. The CMO plans to conduct the critical design review September 3 for the first part of ACE. This first part includes: ACE Baseline Infrastructure, New Web Portal Environment, Account-Based Access for Customs and 40 Importers, Initial Account Database, and ACE Reference Files.

Customs is Poised for Critical Role in Homeland Security

On June 6, 2002, President George W. Bush announced his proposal to create a new cabinet agency, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The new department will integrate homeland security resources into one collaborative effort. Under the proposal, the United States Customs Service will be included in the Border and Transportation Security Division of DHS.

The Customs Service has maintained its presence on the United States borders since 1789. Recognizing the importance of achieving both safe and efficient trade, Customs also has a long history of information sharing and interagency coordination. To enhance that role, Customs will implement improved business processes and use the best technology available today.

Through the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) and the International Trade Data System (ITDS), Customs will transform the way it does business and create an Information Technology (IT) platform for the "border of the future." ACE/ITDS will be capable of linking the government's law enforcement and other databases into one large-scale relational database that tracks all commerce crossing our borders.

ACE/ITDS has the potential to serve as the IT backbone for border security in the 21st Century. It is based upon leveraging systems available today to process all goods being imported into and exported from the U.S. Through ACE/ITDS, border agencies will have the ability to analyze vast amounts of information concurrently, revealing security threats that might otherwise have gone unnoticed.

ACE/ITDS could also serve as the foundation for the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism and the Container Security Initiative. These programs will enable Customs and its partnerships with industry and foreign ports to accurately identify and target the highest risks, and speed the low risks through ports of entry.

Customs trade and security functions are closely linked. According to Office of Homeland Security Director, Tom Ridge, trade and border security functions "are not contradictory, they are complementary." ACE/ITDS will complement and enhance the collaboration that already exists between Customs trade experts and enforcement personnel. The trade community will be provided with a single window to give their information to the government, thus reducing time and transaction costs associated with entering or exporting low risk goods through the United State's ports of entry.

Customs Modernization:
New World, New Tools